



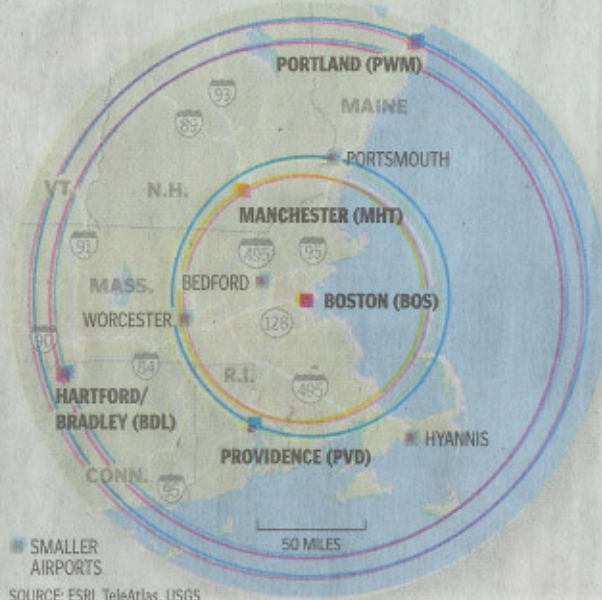
Fliers frequent regional airports

Small is beautiful for travelers seeking low fares and parking fees — and a quick trip from curb to gate

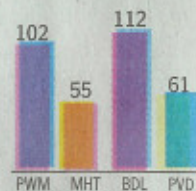


New England's regional airports

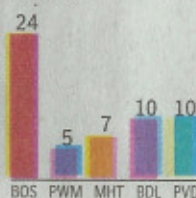
Growth at some regional airports is eclipsing Logan's. Melanie Zeleny, top left, and Rachel Hayes, both of Virginia Beach, Va., work on a puzzle at T.F. Green International Airport in Rhode Island. Passengers at the main entrance of the airport in Manchester, N.H., above.



DISTANCE FROM LOGAN
In miles

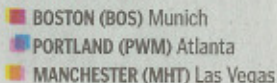


AIRLINES

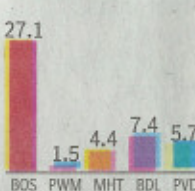


NOTE: Airline totals combine major carriers with regional affiliates.

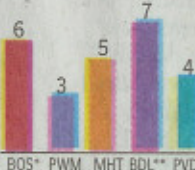
FARTHEST NONSTOP



YEARLY PASSENGERS
In millions, 2005



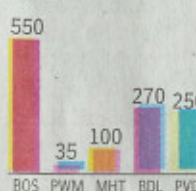
PARKING
Lots and garages



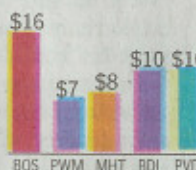
*Remote lots available at varying costs (served by shuttle bus)

**Some lots and garages are remote (served by shuttle bus)

DAILY DEPARTURES
Average



LOWEST PARKING RATE
Daily, in US dollars



JOAN McLAUGHLIN/GLOBE STAFF

By Patrick Smith
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Based on the number of annual passengers, Boston's Logan International is the 18th-busiest airport in the United States, and 34th globally. Those are impressive numbers — possibly the strongest in the world among non-hub airports. In 2005, Logan served 27.1 million customers — a 3.3 percent increase over 2004 and its highest total in five years, according to figures compiled by the Massachusetts Port Authority, which operates the airport.

After years of intense construction, the airport has become more accessible and user-friendly with the opening of the Ted Williams Tunnel, the rebuilding of the airport subway station, the newly inaugurated Silver Line service from South Station, and last spring's unveiling of the \$400 million renovation of Terminal A.

Low fares at regional air

► REGIONAL AIRPORTS *Continued from Page M11*

Elsewhere, work is finally under way on a relief runway at the foot of Bird Island Flats, and officials are in talks with at least one Chinese airline that could soon bring the first-ever nonstops between Boston and the Far East.

However, Logan's growth statistics, while robust, are eclipsed by the numbers reported at several smaller airports around the region. More New Englanders than ever are flying, but increasing numbers are opting for the convenience and low fares of outlying airports in New Hampshire, Connecticut, Maine, and Rhode Island. These facilities have also undergone major upgrades, positioning themselves as low-stress, lower-cost alternatives to Logan.

At Manchester International Airport in New Hampshire, 2005 passenger boardings rose 8.1 percent over 2004 — its 10th consecutive year of growth. At Bradley International in Connecticut, boardings were up 10 percent. T.F. Green International Airport in Rhode Island posted a 4 percent improvement to 5.5 million passengers. At the Portland International Jetport in Maine, the increase was 6.5 percent. In all four cases, 2005 was the busiest year in the airport's history.

Two factors are driving this trend: affordable tickets and convenience. Airfares to and from these secondary locations are increasingly competitive, thanks to a large extent to the presence of low-fare giant Southwest Airlines.

"Studies tell us that ticket prices are people's No. 1 reason for coming here," says J. Brian O'Neill, assistant director for marketing and public relations at Manchester Airport, noting that Southwest has captured a whopping 44 percent of all passengers there. Much like the airports themselves, Southwest personifies the tenets of quick, easy, and affordable — if comparatively light on the luxuries and amenities. In a Bureau of Transport Statistics study released early this year, Manchester, Green, and Bradley led all airports nationally with the highest rates of ticket price decline since 1995. Not coincidental-



Nick Cavadias of Chicago gets his shoes polished at T.F. Green International Airport. He will later frame the entrance to the Portland International Jetport, below. Vi-

ly, Texas-based Southwest is a powerful force at all three.

The costs of a journey by plane involve more than just airfares, of course. Parking fees, for one, are of particular concern to travelers, especially at terminals beyond easy reach of public transport. Daily tabs for a close-in spot at Logan are no match for the rates of its smaller competitors.

Harder to quantify, but no less crucial, is what O'Neill calls the "predictability factor." He says that peak-time waits at Manchester's security checkpoints, for instance, will not exceed 10 minutes. "Let's say you're living halfway between

us and Boston," he explained. "Coming here, you know exactly how long it will take from the time you leave home to the time you're seated at the gate. Heading to Boston, with the vagaries of traffic, distant parking, and frequent delays, it might take half an hour, or it might take two hours."

"The fastest growing segment of our market," added O'Neill, "are folks from northern Massachusetts."

For better or worse, the advance of suburban sprawl has much to do with this rising popularity. Moreover, it's important not to think of these contenders as



reconstructed East Concourse is home to the ever-expanding Southwest. Here, as elsewhere, the Texas mavericks have made substantial inroads.

Manchester, N.H. (MHT)

www.flymanchester.com

You might not expect much from a place known until recently as Manchester-Grenier Industrial Airpark, but MHT has come a long way after \$500 million worth of improvements in the last decade.

Today, the grubby original terminal stands derelict in the distance, as a multilane roadway carries visitors past a looming central garage to a gleaming new facility. Signage is disorienting, and there's a bigness to the place that seems almost unnecessary. Inside, it's the usual glass-and-steel aesthetic so common today, with the ultra-modern feel accented by scattered downhome touches — a welded moose sculpture, a Bobcat tractor, and antique fire engine.

Poorly placed at the far end of baggage claim is an interactive exhibit from the New Hampshire Political Library, showcasing the history of the state's first-in-the-

nation presidential primaries. An upper-level observation rotunda is a nice gesture, but the view of tarmac and distant woods is less than enthralling.

Not so obvious to passengers, but equally to their benefit, both runways have been lengthened considerably, and an advanced instrument landing system now allows for so-called Category 3 touchdowns in extremely low visibility.

Providence (PVD)

www.pvdairport.com

Like Manchester, today's T.F. Green (located in Warwick, just south of the Ocean State capital) is unrecognizable from its former self. In the new terminal, opened in 1996, passengers come and go through a soaring central lobby.

Louvered skylights flood the atrium with natural light. It's sleek and spacious, but there's a bad use of space on the main check-in level, where at least nine igloo-sized luggage scanners ring the perimeter, crowding passengers into Disney-style queues that make passage difficult. In fact, the check-in level seems entirely taken over by security apparatus of one kind or another.

The most helpful feature is a large and professionally staffed information desk in the arrivals lobby.

Portland, Maine (PWM)

www.portlandjetport.org

The name Portland International Jetport displays a bit of undue pride, since the vast bulk of departures are domestically bound short hauls.

Unlike its brethren to the south and west, this airport hasn't seen any major remodeling. Despite \$29 million in ongoing improvements to baggage claim and parking, the main terminal retains an ambience of workaday functionality and a look best described as "no-nonsense rectangular." But the point, after all, is to be here and gone as effortlessly as possible, and PWM is a breeze to navigate, with some of the shortest car-to-kiosk times anywhere.

Statistically, the airport has lagged behind the others in the region, owing both to its greater distance from population centers and the absence of a low-fare airline. However, JetBlue Airways recently announced it will offer four round-trip flights a day be-

Continued on next page

More air passengers are leaving the hassles of Logan behind

Continued from preceding page
tween Portland and JFK Airport in New York starting May 23, which should provide a needed boost.

Bedford, Worcester, Portsmouth, and the Cape

Bedford's Hanscom Field (BED), 20 miles west of Boston, is New England's busiest airport for corporate craft, but the only scheduled airline service, to Trenton, N.J., is by Pan Am Clipper Connection — an upstart that usurped the identity of America's most legendary airline. In the past, sporadic commercial flights have been opposed vociferously by local residents.

Worcester (ORH) once saw regular service from Continental Express and US Airways, among others, but today the only player is little-known Allegiant Air, with four weekly nonstops to Sanford, Fla., a satellite airport for Greater Orlando.

Pease International (PWM), the former Pease Air Force Base, at Portsmouth, N.H., is an interesting case in that it features one of the Northeast's longest runways, a military-built infrastructure, and easy highway access off Interstate 95. Yet little has come of it, due partly to the more aggressive marketing efforts of Manchester. Scattered flights are offered by Clipper Connection and Allegiant Air.

Down on the Cape, where the bulk of fliers are vacationers and short-distance commuters, scheduled service is limited. Hyannis is a stop for US Airways Express, and is headquarters of the highly successful Cape Air, which flies nine-passenger piston planes to several nearby cities.

For now, the future for these airports is all about continued growth and the ever-increasing volume of customers. But within their strengths, at least as alternatives to Logan — namely their compact size and accessibility — may also lurk their Achilles' heel. Success is a two-edged sword; as the crowds increase and the taxicabs jam with planes, advantages can dwindle.

"This requires us always to be one step ahead of our own popularity," O'Neill admitted. "We've done a really good job of that, even as we've quadrupled in size. Our goal is not to become Logan North, but we're comfortable with our success thus far, and passengers are, too."

And lack of size can present its own disadvantages. As a rule, smaller airports are served by smaller planes heading to fewer destinations. The majority of flights are bound for transit hubs, so chances are you'll be connecting en route. This is where the convenience edge is partially lost: the time saved by avoiding Logan

is liable to be eaten up during a layover in Chicago, Newark, or Atlanta.

And although Logan's growth hasn't matched the rate of its smaller neighbors, it's still increasing. "We just had our fourth straight annual rise," says Phil Orlandella, spokesman for Massport. "And regardless of what Southwest might be doing in the area, Logan has more low-cost carriers, many more destinations both domestically and overseas, and all the amenities and benefits

of a major international airport." To thwart defections, Massport has poured \$1.7 million into its "Fly Logan" advertising campaign — an effort that Orlandella takes pains to emphasize is not funded by taxpayers.

Massport knows that losing a certain number of customers is a foregone conclusion. But it also sees the contest as one of apples and oranges. In the end, New England's regional airports are what they are: niche players doing

what they can — and doing it. Patrick Smith is the air travel writer for Salon.com and author of "Ask The Pilot — Everything You Need to Know About Air Travel." Contact him through www.askthepilot.com.

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